

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 0052

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MT, IT

SUBJECT: MINTOFF CONTINUES TO PRESS ITALIANS FOR
MORE ASSISTANCE

1. ITALIAN AMBASSADOR DA RIN TELLS ME THAT HE IS
"DROWNING" IN A SEA OF MALTESE REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL
ASSISTANCE FROM ITALY. THE MOST RECENT REQUESTS, ALL
OF THEM STRESSING THAT THEY SHOULD BE PROVIDED FREE
OF CHARGE AND WITH GREAT "URGENCY," INCLUDE:

A. EIGHT MORE DUMPT TRUCKS FOR USE ON THE LUQA
AIRFIELD EXTENSION PROJECT (THE ITALIANS ARE ALREADY
SUPERVISING THIS PROJECT AND PROVIDING A TEAM OF
CIVILIAN ENGINEERS);

B. THREE INSTRUCTORS IN ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL
DESIGN;

C. A MILITARY (NCO) MECHANIC/INSTRUCTOR TO
TEACH HELICOPTER MAINTENANCE IN MALTA FOR A 12-MONTH
PERIOD;

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D. A PILOT/INSTRUCTOR TO TRAIN MALTESE PILOTS
IN HELICOPTER FLIGHT OPERATIONS;

E. "SIX OR EIGHT" NCO SPECIALISTS IN TELE-
COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT;

F. TRAINING IN ITALY FOR TWO MALTESE HELICOPTER
PILOTS AND TWO MECHANICS;

G. SURPLUS ITALIAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT SUCH AS
TRUCKS, GRADERS, ROAD TOWING EQUIPMENT, ETC., FOR USE
IN PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS. (MALTA HAS ONLY RECENTLY
RECEIVED THE LAST SHIPMENT OF SUCH U.S. SURPLUS ITEMS
UNDER THE NOW COMPLETED USG DOLS TWO MILLION EXCESS
PROPERTY AGREEMENT.) TO AVOID ANY TRANSPORTATION
CHARGES, MINTOFF HAS SPECIFIED THAT THIS SURPLUS
ITALIAN EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO MALTA ON
ITALIAN NAVAL VESSELS;

H. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHANNELS FROM 60 TO
180 ON THE RECENTLY INSTALLED "RADIO BRIDGE" TO
LINK SICILY, LIBYA AND MALTA;

I. SIX CIVILIAN EXPERTS TO TEACH VARIOUS TRADES
IN THE DIM (DIRGHAJN IL-MALTIN) SUCH AS MECHANICS,
HEAVY MACHINERY, ETC.;

J. MORE ITALIAN ASSISTANCE TO "TO IMPROVE THE
MALTESE CONTENT/ OF LOCAL TV PROGRAMMING HERE.
(THE GERMANS AND FRENCH HAVE RECEIVED THE SAME
REQUEST.);

K. AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF ITALIAN EXPERTS
TO TRAIN MALTESE GROUND PERSONNEL AT LUQA AIRPORT
TO OPERATE THE AIRFIELD AFTER THE BRITISH DEPART
DURING THE 1977-1979 PERIOD.

2. THE LAST ITEM (K) IS NOT ASTONISHING, SINCE
THE PROVISION OF PRECISELY SUCH TRAINING IS PART
OF THE MILITARY FACILITIES AGREEMENT BETWEEN MALTA AND
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THE UK, IS WELL UNDERSTOOD BY BOTH SIDES, AND THE
ACTUAL TRAINING IS ALREADY UNDERWAY BY RAF
PERSONNEL AT LUQA. THE BRITISH HAVE SO INFORMED
DA RIN.

3. DA RIN IS NONPLUSSED BY THE STEADY STREAM OF
MALTESE REQUESTS, ALL THE MORE SO SINCE HE HAS NOW
LEARNED THAT MINTOFF OFTEN ASKS SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS

FOR EXACTLY THE SAME ASSISTANCE -- APPARENTLY IN THE HOPE THAT AT LEAST ONE WILL PROVIDE IT. HE IS PARTICULARLY DISTURBED, HOWEVER, AT THE SHARP INCREASE IN REQUESTS THE ITALIANS ARE RECEIVING FOR SUCH ASSISTANCE, COMPARED WITH THE APPARENTLY DIMINISHING NUMBER RECEIVED BY OTHER WESTERN GOVERNMENTS. DA RIN CALCULATES THAT THE GOI IS NOW PROVIDING OVER DOLS TWO POINT FIVE MILLION ANNUALLY IN DIRECT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO MALTA -- EXCLUDING A SIZEABLE NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIP OFFERS.

4. EVEN ALLOWING FOR A PERHAPS INEVITABLE INCREASE IN REQUESTS RESULTING FROM THE LEONE STATE VISIT IN DECEMBER 1975, DA RIN BELIEVES THAT ITALY IS BEING ASKED TO BEAR AN UNFAIR AID BURDEN IN MALTA. HE FEARS THAT THE PRESENT LEVEL OF ITALIAN ASSISTANCE MAY SIMPLY NOT BE SUSTAINABLE FOR VERY LONG, BECAUSE OF MINTOFF'S DESIRE TO HOLD THE SUPERPOWERS AT ARMS LENGTH, DA RIN RECOGNIZES THAT THE USG CANNOT HELP IN ANY SIGNIFICANT WAY. HE DOES THINK THAT THE FRENCH AND GERMANS COULD, HOWEVER, AND ESPECIALLY THE BRITISH, WHO BEAR A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY BECAUSE OF THEIR 150 YEAR PRESENCE HAVE AS THE FORMER COLONIAL POWER.

5. COMMENT: WHILE THE BRITISH HAVE DONE AND ARE DOING A GREAT DEAL TO ASSIST THE DEVELOPMENT OF MALTA, THEY HAVE ALSO BEEN BURNED REPEATEDLY IN WELL-MEANING ATTEMPTS TO RESPOND TO MINTOFF'S NEVER-ENDING REQUESTS. THEY HAVE OFTEN EXPENDED CONSIDRABLE TIME, MONEY AND EFFORT TO PREPARE A GIVEN PROJECT, ONLY TO DISCOVER TOO LATE THAT MINTOFF HAD EITHER CHANGED HIS MIND OR THAT SOME

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OTHER GOVERNMENT OR INSTITUTION HAD UNDERTAKEN THE IDENTICAL PROJECT -- ALSO AT MINTOFF'S REQUEST. UNDERSTANDABLY, THE BRITISH HAVE TIRED OF THIS TREATMENT AND ARE NOW TAKING LONGER AND MORE CAREFUL LOOKS AT ANY SUCH REQUESTS BEFORE RESPONDING POSITIVELY. THEY HAVE ALSO LEARNED TO SAY "NO" TO MINTOFF. THE ITALIANS APPARENTLY HAVE NOT.

6. IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE THAT THE ITALIANS HAVE BEEN GENEROUS AND FORTHCOMING IN THEIR AID TO MALTA. WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR THIS, FOR THEY ARE MOTIVATED NOT ONLY BY OBVIOUS GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY, BUT BY A CONVICTION THAT THE WEST SHOULD NOT STAND IDLY BY AND SEE MALTA DRIFT FURTHER INTO A PRO-QADHAFI, ANTI-WESTERN STANCE. ON THE OTHER

HAND, MINTOFF IS FULLY AWARE OF THIS ITALIAN
CONCERN, TREASURES AND RELIES ON HIS "SPECIAL
RELATIONSHIP" WITH ITALIAN SECRETARY-GENERAL MANZINI,
AND IS OBVIOUSLY DETERMINED TO MILK THE ITALIAN
CONCERN TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE. TO BE
MORE BLUNT, MINTOFF MAY WELL HAVE DECIDED THAT HE
HAS FOUND A PATSY IN THE ITALIAN WILLINGNESS TO
MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO GIVE HIM WHAT HE
WANTS, EITHER BY PROVIDING IT THEMSELVES OR BY
ACTING AS MINTOFF'S "AGENT" IN ATTEMPTING TO
INDUCE OTHER NATO GOVERNMENTS TO DO SO. SMITH

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